It all started when Jessica gave birth to her son, Peyton. He was born with a genetic disorder called Microcephaly, which means that his head and his brain do not grow normally. At four months old, Peyton’s head hadn’t grown at all. The doctors told Jessica that he wasn’t going to live past 1 year old.

“At four months old, Peyton’s head hadn’t grown at all. The doctors told Jessica that he wasn’t going to live past 1 year old.”

“Imagine you were told your child only had one year to live? What would you do? Who would you turn to? Here’s Jessica’s story…”

For the next several months, Jessica and her partner, Daren, struggled to cope with the diagnosis. Jessica had coddling issues with Peyton and was very overprotective.

For the next several months, Jessica and her partner, Daren, struggled to cope with the diagnosis. Jessica had coddling issues with Peyton and was very overprotective.

When Peyton turned 1, and continued to show progress, Jessica was...
One Year to Live (continued)

unable to celebrate the milestone. “I couldn’t enjoy those moments with him because I was constantly stressed about his condition,” she said.

Sibling Challenges

During that time, Jessica was neglecting her other children, Haley, age 6, and Karter, age 4, and observed Karter’s behavior changing. As the middle child, and the only other male sibling, he started to act out and began to self-harm. Jessica was referred to Highfields’ Home-Based therapy program to help with Karter’s behavioral issues. She and Daren worked with Highfields’ Counselor Ruth Vanderpool-Combs to try to get their lives back on track.

Ruth taught Karter coping skills and strategies to help him with his anger, including ways to calm down and self-regulate. As Peyton got older, he had the same aggressive tendencies as Karter, on top of other developmental challenges, so Ruth stayed with the family and began to focus on Peyton.

Peyton has delayed development, sensory issues and uses nonverbal communication. Ruth used games and activities to help him open up, share, and engage with his siblings. Ruth and Jessica also used materials like balloons, rice, and play dough to help Peyton overcome his sensory challenges.

“We’re Ready”

Ruth recently closed her case with the family, and although it’s bittersweet for Jessica, she’s in a much better place.

“There was a time in my life when I really needed somebody, and lucky for us, we got Ruth,” said Jessica. “Now, it’s time to take a break and really see how Daren and I do on our own. We’re ready.”

Parenting 101

You helped bring a family together!

A New Chapter

After twelve years together, Brian and his husband, Raymond, decided to start a family. Neither of them had any experience raising kids, but it was a challenge they were ready to face.

They began the process of obtaining a license to adopt or foster a child, and in 2014, they had their first placement, a 6-year-old boy named Quentin.

Raising a Foster Child

Quentin was already receiving services from Highfields’ Wraparound program due to being in foster care and having a few academic and behavioral concerns. Wraparound Facilitator, Brandi Davis, began working with the family when Quentin came to live with them. “Wraparound was a great experience,” said Brian. “Brandi was great at her job, and very knowledgeable. She helped us and gave us resources that we needed.”

Brian and Raymond attended Parent Management Training, which helps parents and caregivers manage the behavior of their child.

Forever Family

Brian and Raymond finalized their adoption of Quentin in 2016. They decided to expand their family more, and 9-year-old Timothy was placed with them. They requested Brandi for the adoption process.

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